

THE GENERAL AND THE QUEEN'S HOSPITALS,

BIRMINGHAM.

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# INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT THE

OPENING OF THE SESSION,

1876-7.

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## INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

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HONOURED by the confidence of my colleagues, I am here to-day to address a few words to old and new pupils, on the occasion of the opening of another academical year. In the name of the staffs of the General and Queen's Hospitals, happily and successfully united for purposes of clinical instruction, I offer a cordial welcome to every student in this theatre. Many of you return to work in which you have already made some progress ; some are here for the first time. I hope you all come with a deep sense of your responsibility, and with an earnest desire to avail yourselves to the utmost of the great opportunities which are given you for gaining a knowledge of the practice of your profession.

I cordially and sincerely congratulate you upon the choice which brings you here. Do not think you have chosen a calling which is likely to make you rich ; very few earn affluence in our ranks. But you may confidently expect to secure an honourable independence, without the aid of patronage or party, if you have ability and if you use it aright. I hope a genuine and unalterable love for science has guided your choice ; then you will always have pleasure in

your work, a pleasure which will often deepen into happiness when you pursue a profession which, more, perhaps, than any other, brings with its practice opportunity for doing good.

I congratulate you, the profession generally, and the public of this important town and district, upon the prosperity and promise of the Birmingham Medical School. Its history, extending over nearly half a century, although it bears the burden of many struggles and vicissitudes, of many administrative deficiencies and disasters, is yet an honourable history—a history made honourable by the record of much self-sacrificing zeal, by a succession of teachers, not a few of whom have been truly eminent, by a roll of students, not a few of whom have been truly distinguished. About five years ago the General and Queen's Hospitals, before, with changing fortunes, rival clinical schools, became united for the instruction of students. You cannot know the difficulties under which this union was effected, nor the individual sacrifices which it entailed, nor can you estimate all the benefits that spring from it, but you will soon learn to appreciate its advantages to yourselves. Those who carried out this amalgamation had chiefly in view the welfare of the pupils of the school. I believe and hope this association of the two great hospitals of the town will be permanent; it has already effected much good, and experience of its working has more than realised the sanguine expectations of its promoters. You have now the privilege of watching and

sharing in the practice of twenty physicians and surgeons, who are responsible for the charge of four hundred beds, and the annual care of nearly four thousand in-patients and forty thousand out-patients—a staff of teachers and a *clientele* unequalled in most other schools, either in the metropolis or in the provinces.

At a time when some of you, perhaps, may be inclined to over-estimate the relative importance of a purely professional, as compared with a general, training, let me tell you that you are not fitly prepared to come here unless you have been well grounded in the rudiments of a liberal education. All the nineteen examining boards now very rightly demand that students, before entering upon the study of medicine, shall pass a preliminary examination in the subjects of ordinary scholastic culture. In most cases, I am sorry to say, this examination is lamentably insufficient. The progress you may make in your studies here, no less than the position you will occupy hereafter in public and professional estimation, depends very greatly upon the degree and extent of mental cultivation you have already attained. Do not let this be an occasion for laying aside the culture of general literature. Learn to turn to it with delight when severer studies press too hardly. I hope you have acquired a competent acquaintance with more languages than your own. I hope you are able to read, in that classic tongue which for ages was the common bond of men of learning and of science, the marvellous

writings of the fathers of our art. I hope you are able, without wholly relying upon the treacherous aid of translations, to watch to some extent the rapid progress of research and discovery in Europe. Than a thorough study of logic, as a means of mental discipline, nothing can help you more in the orderly and enduring acquirement of scientific knowledge, in the cultivation of habits of observation, of clear thought, and of precise expression. Logic now, as truly as ever, is the only art of arts, the surest foundation on which you can build : learn to measure all things by its exacting canons, learn to test all teachings by its searching scrutiny. Were such a discipline more general amongst us, our ranks would yield fewer followers and apologists of those unscientific errors and hasty generalisations which have given a brief life to one or two insignificant sects outside the wide-embracing pale of rational medicine.

Although I advise you all to attend regularly, from the very beginning of your course, upon hospital practice, for the time before you is all too short for the work you have to do, I must tell you plainly that you cannot fully avail yourselves of your opportunities for observing the detection and treatment of disease and injury ; you cannot, in a word, understand what you see, until you have made some progress in those simpler sciences which form the broad foundation of medicine. Apply yourselves diligently at the College to the study of anatomy, physiology, chemistry, materia medica and botany. They are well taught

there ; you must know them, and you cannot learn them here. You must acquire some considerable acquaintance with these subjects before you can pass the earlier examinations of the licensing bodies. All through your curriculum you ought to attend continuously the work both of the College and of the hospitals ; but in the earlier part of your course give preference to the former, in the later you may allow prominence to the latter. You must know the outlines of the marvellous structure of the human body, and something of its healthy development and working ; you must have some appreciation of the chemistry of vital processes, of the secretions, and of the properties and action of remedial agents ; you must have some acquaintance with the therapeutic preparations commonly used in medicine, before you can take an active and intelligent part in the relief of pain and the cure of injury and disease. The work of a hospital, especially the surgical portion of it, has usually a great charm for the young student. It is right it should be so. But it must not be permitted to lead him to neglect in his earlier years the more sober studies I have mentioned. There is a time for all things. You must remember that medicine is both a science, or, more truly, a complex group of sciences, and an art. Your training must first be mainly scientific, and then mainly practical. Before you know something of the principles of the science, you cannot appreciate the rules of the art. Cultivate order and method—the only sure means of economising time—in all you do.



Be careful to assign its proper place to each of the subjects before you, and allot your time and thought to each in a measure corresponding to its relative importance. Do not fall into the too exclusive pursuit of any favourite science, to the neglect of the others, and at the expense of the precious time you can devote to the technical part of your profession. Keep ever in view the end that is before you. You do not come here merely to become good anatomists, or good physiologists, or good chemists, but, being these, to become good physicians and surgeons.

In choosing to become practitioners of medicine, you have adopted a calling which often carries with its practice an enormous weight of responsibility—a responsibility more direct, more urgent, more personal, and more undivided than attaches to the pursuit of any other profession. You have undertaken to fit yourselves for dealing with questions of stupendous importance, with the health and sickness of individuals, of families, and of communities, with life and with death. For such a task no education can be too severe, no preparation too exacting; and your training will not be complete unless it reach to morals and to character, no less than to knowledge and to skill. In the face of this responsibility I desire to urge you, as emphatically as I am able, to be diligent above all things in your attendance upon hospital practice. If you do your duty, in that practice you must take some active and personal part; you do not come here merely to see our work, or to record your names. I have a



warm appreciation of the earnest and untiring labour which some few of you, as clerks and dressers, have already performed. But, to our senior students, I desire to say very plainly, and in all friendliness, that you do not, as a body, apply yourselves either in sufficient numbers or with sufficient diligence to the work of the hospitals. Opportunities are here freely within your reach for obtaining a competent practical knowledge of your profession. If you let them pass by now, unheeded and unimproved, they may never be redeemed; to most of you they will never again arise. To a very great extent you are masters of your future. The manner in which you spend your years now will colour the whole of your after lives. You are now either laying up for yourselves a treasure of coming triumphs, or a bitter succession of disappointments.

I advise you all to hold dresserships and clerkships. If you spend three years in your curriculum, at least one year, and if your course of hospital attendance extend to four years, at least two years, ought to be spent continuously by each of you in one or other of these offices. I am aware I am advising you to exceed the requirements of the examining boards. But your end is not merely to secure a legal qualification to practise; you come here to really qualify yourselves for your profession, and you can only do so by an active use of all your opportunities for engaging in the recognition and treatment of injury and disease. You can only learn an art by practice. Reading and

lectures are only the complements of practice; they cannot take its place, nor can they themselves even serve you fully without it. It is your duty to supplement your practical work by reading; but reading can never supersede it. Clinical lectures and tutorial instruction are of the highest value, and by their aid you may learn many things better and more easily than by any other means. But not even these can stand in the stead of the work I urge upon you. The very number and excellence of the clinical discourses that are now provided sometimes tend, I am afraid, to divert you from your own particular work. I have known the conduct of this school for fifteen years. Among the many changes that have occurred in it within that period, not the least striking has been a gradual multiplication of clinical lectures and demonstrations and a progressive diminution of clinical clerks and dressers.

On the whole, I think it is best that you should begin by being surgical dressers; then you may become physicians' clerks, and such you may remain, or you may again join the surgeons, according to your time, tastes and prospects. It is of the highest importance that you should fully avail yourselves of your great opportunities for observing the management, and especially the operative management, of surgical diseases and injuries. While a knowledge of practical medicine, no less important, may hereafter keep you from many a disaster, a knowledge of practical surgery may save you from many a dis-

grace. Most of you, if not all of you, will probably practise your profession in the honourable and useful position of a general practitioner. Then it is absolutely necessary that each of you should become a good surgeon and a good physician. But if you wish only to be either, learn that you cannot truly be one, at all events at the outset, without being the other. The division between medicine and surgery, which you see in hospital work, is convenient, but it is not fundamental; the boundary is well defined, but is wholly arbitrary. Medicine and surgery, in science at least, are now absolutely one. An exclusive study of either is no longer justifiable; it is not even possible. While either can be purely practised, neither can be purely learnt. Purity in the knowledge of either is only an euphemism for an incomplete acquaintance with the one, and entire ignorance of the other. Pathology is the great link between them, or, more truly, their common foundation. But the whole range of experience and work in medicine and surgery is now so vast and is so rapidly increasing, that in large centres of population a few practitioners will always be required who devote themselves in practice to one branch or one part of a branch of the profession. But for you now, as students, whatever your future, there can be no such limitation. The practice of medicine and surgery, as exhibited in hospital work, must alike claim your most earnest attention.

It is only by patient work in the wards and in the out-patient rooms that you can learn the use of the

stethoscope, the laryngoscope, and the ophthalmoscope. If you would practise medicine on a level with modern knowledge, and, consequently, if you would practise it dutifully and with satisfaction, it is essential that you should be well acquainted with the employment of these instruments. If you leave the hospital without learning these things, you will find it almost impossible, in any other sphere of practice, to repair your neglect. The work of three-quarters of a century has established the stethoscope as a diagnostic instrument of daily and absolutely indispensable use. By its aid you must train your ears to detect the wonderful sounds which arise in the body in the exercise of its healthy functions, and their manifold and complex variations in disease. You can only know these things by hearing them for yourselves. No amount of reading, no lectures, however able, can teach you to recognise the crepitation of pneumonia, the rub of pleurisy, or the beat of a healthy heart. You have ample opportunity while you are hospital students for becoming familiar with the use of the laryngoscope and ophthalmoscope. Their aid has thrown light upon lesions, concerning which we were previously literally in the dark. These instruments must not be reserved for specialists; there is much good in them, and by a little patience and practice you may master all the difficulties which attend their employment.

As a surgeon's dresser or a physician's clerk it will chiefly be your duty to record, under the immediate supervision of one of your teachers, the daily progress

of cases of injury and disease. To record you must observe; to observe you must examine. Careful case-taking is the best means for the acquirement of a serviceable knowledge of medicine; it conduces to a logical and systematic arrangement of observations. You must write as well as read and observe, if you wish to be fully trained in our art. You must begin by recording all you can observe. Soon your power of observation will greatly increase in acuteness; you will note circumstances which escaped you before. And with this augmented perception will come increased discrimination. By experience you will learn the essentials of disease, and you will rightly estimate the value of its accidental and less constant features. So you will avoid the prolixity of untrained industry, from which medical literature has suffered so much; and you will acquire real conciseness, not the spurious brevity of non-observation, but that intelligent terseness which comes from a capacity for discriminating between the trivial and the stupendous. If you have brilliancy, and if you trust to it alone, you will often blunder; if you have none or little, but if you are content to work with patience and with method, you may, from slow and toilsome beginnings, acquire a marvellous quickness of perception, which will almost seem an intuition, and on which you may rely with confidence. You will soon perform without effort what at first you only learnt with labour.

Although you will have greater leisure for the

purpose when you have passed your final examinations, I advise you to extend your reading, even now, beyond the text-books and manuals of the day. No other profession can rival ours in its literature. The sooner you learn to love its books and to be proud of them the better. If you strive aright to reach professional perfection and eminence, you will seek learning as well as skill. We suffer much from many of our learned brethren who are unskilful, yet much more from the skilful who are unlearned. In a knowledge of the glorious achievements of the past, and in the lives of the masters of our art, you will find at once your strongest stimulus to exertion and your surest safeguard against self-conceit.

I hope an acquaintance with the literature of your profession will help to fill you with a fitting sense of the dignity and worth of your calling. If you feel this pride aright, you will keep your own honour spotless, and you will be jealous of the honour of the body to which you belong. You will shrink from wounding a brother's reputation, you will not shut yourself up in selfish isolation from your fellows, you will not labour only to get gold, you will scorn the arts of the toady and the time-server, and you will ever be ready to make some sacrifice to accomplish any work which tends to foster professional unity, and to raise your calling in public usefulness and esteem. Do not seek success by dragging others down, but by raising up yourselves. It is your duty to use all fair and honest means to secure and maintain your own



repute ; but you may do so most perfectly, indeed you can only do so successfully, while holding an unswerving regard for the interests and good name of your fellow-practitioners.

And now I have done. I have striven to set forth some outline of the work that is before you. Look forward with confidence. Let the highest aims be your's. Let your minds be filled with a deep sense of your responsibility. Let your hearts ever grow in courage and in kindness. Strive to discover the true and to practise the good. In such a spirit labour to profit by opportunity, and then,

“The secret consciousness  
Of duty well performed ; the public voice  
Of praise that honours virtue, and rewards it ;  
All these are your's.”



BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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PAMPHLETS :

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